FBI & THE PRESS

ASSOCIATED PRESS (18 SEPT 1969)

G&M 18 Sept 69

Man is found innocent after serving 37 years, given a full pardon

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Frank Sawyer, 70, jailed 37 years ago for a bank robbery he said he didn't commit, was pardoned yesterday by Governor Robert Docking.

The office of the Governor said the prisoner of the Kansas State Penitentiary is innocent of a 1932 bank robbery.

A former U.S. public enemy No. 1, Alvin Karpis, now on parole in Montreal, had said that he and several others committed the bank robbery 37 years ago and that Mr. Sawyer did not take part.

Mr. Sawyer has been serving a sentence of 20 to 100 years for the robbery of a Fort Scott bank in 1932.

Mr. Karpis made his statement atfer leaving the United States, following his parole from a prison sentence on other charges.

The man who prosecuted Mr. Sawyer also testified. He said he now believes that Mr. Sawyer did not participate in the robbery.

Mr. Docking said the recommendation for a pardon had been made by his pardon attorney, Robert Ochs, and by the Board of Probation and Parole.

"Based on the two recommendations, testimony gathered by eyewitnesses of the robbery and an in-depth investigation of the case, Frank Sawyer is innocent of the crime he was convicted of in Kansas," Mr. Docking said. "If he did not commit the crime for which he is serving time now in the Kansas State Penitentiary he should be released immediately."

The Governor said in a statement that formal papers for Mr. Sawyer's release are being sent to the state prison. A spokesman said he understands Mr. Sawyer will be freed as soon as the papers are processed.

Mr. Karpis, in Ottawa on a business trip, said that Mr. Sawyer happened to be picked up in a "hot car" containing shotguns and revolvers after the robbery. Somehow Mr. Sawyer was identified by witnesses to the crime. He said that when he was picked up in 1936 by the FBI for kidnapping a Minnesota brewer, the conviction of Mr. Sawyer was discussed.

CANADIAN PRESS (18 SEPT. 1969)

Kingston Whig-Standard 18 Sept 69

FBI knew Sawyer was innocent says former public enemy No. 1

MONTREAL (CP) — Alvin (Old Creepy) Karpis, one-time United States public enemy No. 1, said Wednesday that U.S. authorities knew from the start the innocence of Frank Sawyer, a prisoner of Kansas State Penitentiary pardoned for a 1932 bank robbery.

Karpis, 61, has lived in Montreal since January after deportation from the U.S., where he served 33 years for various crimes.

Sawyer, 70, was granted a full pardon Wednesday for the $40,000 armed robbery at Fort Scott, Kan., in 1932.

Karpis was a central figure in his release, making a public statement in July that he and five others were responsible for the robbery.

Sawyer was serving 20 to 100 years.

Karpis said in a telephone interview that Sawyer happened to be picked up in a "hot car" containing shotguns and revolvers after the robbery. Somehow, Sawyer was identified by eyewitnesses to the crime.

He said that when he was picked up in 1936, the FBI conceded in an offhand manner, that Sawyer was serving a bum rap.